

Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure will finish its consideration of H.R. 2400, which authorizes surface transportation funding for the next 6 years, better known as BESTEA. This is the most important domestic bill of this Congress and, indeed, well into the next century. It provides for rails, roads and pathways that bind our Nation's cities and regions into one country.

In 1991, ISTEA, the groundbreaking legislation, promoted efficient use of scarce resources by encouraging balanced transportation systems and long-range planning. As a supporter of ISTEA's principles, I have been pleased with the progress of BESTEA through Congress. I want to thank our chairman and ranking members for their terrific work. Thanks to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Shuster), the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. Oberstar), the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. Petri) and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. Rahall), H.R. 2400 is proof that in the spirit of bipartisanship, building on sound policy, everyone can win.

BESTEA continues the ISTEA tradition of encouraging real transportation solutions. Our citizens know from experience that an unbalanced, unplanned transportation system can waste millions of their dollars while eliminating their choices and even destroying their communities. ISTEA contained a mix of incentives, instructions and opportunities for citizen participation that helped guarantee that Federal dollars will be spent wisely.

Mr. Speaker, this is a comprehensive bill. Its greatest achievement is in promoting the two pillars of sound transportation: balance and local decision-making. A balanced transportation system is more efficient, cost effective, and it gives people choices about how they get to where they need to go to live, work, and play.

Mr. Speaker, I am particularly pleased that in BESTEA all modes of transportation are supported. BESTEA does great things for bicycling with strong support of the Congressional Bicycle Caucus and a national campaign to promote bikes. It requires increased consideration of safety for cyclists. It adds important provisions to require that bike and pedestrian facilities be considered when new roads are planned, and it increases overall funding for the Enhancements and CMAQ programs, which have been the key to over \$1 billion in cycling facilities.

BESTEA does great things for transit and transit does great things for our communities, returning \$4 in benefits in the environment, social and infrastructure for every dollar that we invest. Millions of us, whether we use transit or not, have reasons to be grateful for the record funding level of \$36 billion over the next 6 years.

BESTEA does great things for rail, one of the most cost-effective ways to move passengers and freight. Rail helps to relieve pressure on our crowded highways and airports, adding capacity at a fraction of the cost.

BESTEA does great things for drivers. These funds are essential for badly needed maintenance and repair of our roads and bridges and to add capacity where it is truly needed. The best thing for motorists is that balancing the transportation system means giving people alternatives which in turn reduces congestion, pollution and even road rage. Even if we do not use the alternatives, the experience for the motorist is improved.

BESTEA also maintains the local decision-making, one of the most important but underappreciated things the Federal Government has done for communities in the last 25 years.

I have to say that one omission does, in fact, concern me. For in 1991, with the passage of ISTEA, Congress required States and larger communities to develop realistic plans that linked transportation and land use. Transportation plans were intended to avoid wasting scarce resources.

Unfortunately, BESTEA takes a step backward by making this planning optional. This means, as a practical matter, some of the States which have the greatest need are less likely to do the integrating planning for the future.

We have been working on improving the planning language for BESTEA for months and this struggle will continue through final passage. We cannot afford to throw money at transportation solutions that will only cause more problems in the long run. Planning does not mean dictating results; it simply ensures that communities cannot get away with ignoring problems, or worse, shifting them on to their neighbors. These are unarguably Federal priorities.

I think the text that best captures the spirit of the ISTEA reauthorization is to be found in the 58th chapter, 12th verse of Isaiah:

Those from among you; Shall build the waste places; You shall rise up the foundations of many generations; And you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach; The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.

I think ISTEA makes progress towards this timeless goal and I, along with the prophet Isaiah, am pleased to support it.